

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Irene School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** January 18, 2005

**Date of Report:** January 28, 2005

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Data table A – General information
- Date table C- Suspension and expulsion information

- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- News releases—Tri-County News
- District’s comprehensive plan

### **Meets requirements**

The Irene School District has an established and effectively implemented ongoing child find system to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years, who may need special education.

The Irene School District has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay. The district keeps a census log of newborns, their name, birth dates, and parents’ names for upcoming screenings. Each family is contacted by phone as well as notification in the local newspaper. Interagencies such as Head Start and Southeast Area Cooperative personnel are present at screenings to assist and provide information. Each child/parent receives a packet including books, crayons, and pencils, as well as readiness skills information for the parent.

There are no private schools in the district. When the Irene School District refers or places a child with disabilities in a private school or facility, the school district ensures special education and related services are provided in accordance with requirements of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

The district uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyze school district level data to determine if the school district/agency is making progress toward the state’s performance goals and indicators. The district reviews and analyzes discipline data and revises policies/procedures if significant discrepancies are occurring between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

The district comprehensive plan has established procedures for the employment of special education personnel who have the special education endorsements as required in state rules, including child evaluators to work with children with disabilities. The district staff completes needs assessment forms, which provide the basis for in-service training.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting requirements for Principle One, General Supervision.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Data table I
- Parent surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Student files

**Promising practice**

The Irene school/community library has been identified as a promising practice by the district. The library is open two evenings a week from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., as well as during school hours. The community has access to the books and the computer/internet, etc. A volunteer from the community works at the library one half day a week. The librarian does a 'Family Reads' program through the summer, as well as summer reading activities. Family Reads invites mom and/or dad or grandma and/or grandpa to come and read with the children. A community book discussion takes place in the evening. Large print books are available, and patrons with vision problems are assisted in getting books on tape from the state library. A book fair was recently held that was open to the community. Also, the librarian makes home deliveries to shut-ins in the community.

During the school day, the elementary students come to the library two times per week. During these visits, the librarian reads to the children, presents lessons in how to use the library and media present in the library, and the children are given an opportunity to check out books. The librarian also addresses critical thinking and logical thinking skills, and introduces the children to different types of literature, helping them find their individual areas of interest. The librarian helps promote good behavior and listening skills, as well as helping children become comfortable and develop a relationship with the library. When library books are checked out, they are placed in a neon-colored nylon bag in which to take the books home, which helps save wear and tear on the books.

**Meets requirements**

The school district provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities. The school district ensure that eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative school days are being provided FAPE.

**Validation Results****Promising practice**

The review team validated the Irene school/community library as a promising practice.

An additional promising practice identified by the review team is the district's Before and After School Program for kindergarten through sixth grade children. The program was started in the fall of 2003. It is funded by a state grant and district funds. Children are able to complete homework, play games, and various other activities when they participate in the program. Interviews with staff indicated the program is positive for children and parents.

**Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Pubic Education.

<b>Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation</b>
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A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Student file reviews
- Evaluation reports
- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- Southeast Area Cooperative forms
- Multidisciplinary team report document
- Prior notice document
- Parental rights document

### **Meets requirements**

Staff file reviews indicated the district provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. The district's comprehensive plan and file reviews indicate evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements.

The district ensures proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. The school district ensures reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

### **Needs improvement**

Through file reviews, the district concluded that functional assessment needs to be improved. In seven of fourteen initial evaluations, functional assessment was not available to determine present levels of performance.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation meets the requirements, with the exception of evaluation procedures (functional assessment). See information under: Out of Compliance

### **Needs improvement**

The review team addresses functional evaluation under; Out of Compliance.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:04.7-8 Evaluation procedures**

##### **ARSD 24:05:24.01:12 Multiple disabilities defined**

The district is required to ensure at a minimum that evaluation procedures include the following: a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities. The evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.

Multiple disabilities means that two or more of the following disabilities affect the student at the same time: deafness, mental retardation, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, serious emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment including blindness. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

A child identified on child count as multiple disabilities did not have evaluation to support two or more disability areas. Interviews and file documentation from previous evaluations indicate the student does have multiple disabilities; however, the child was not assessed in all areas to support multiple disabilities when reevaluated in spring 2004 nor was documentation pulled forward from previous evaluations. The district must conduct a comprehensive evaluation to determine if the student meets the requirements of a child with multiple disabilities.

#### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:04.7-8 Evaluation procedures**

The district is required to ensure at a minimum that evaluation procedures include the following: a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities. The evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.

Based on the evaluation given, the review team was unable to verify that two students were properly assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability. The instruments used for identification were the Preschool Language Scale-4 and Bracken-2. The referrals indicated developmental (adaptive, personal social, motor and cognitive) concerns. In addition, the prior notices noted the developmental area was to be assessed. The evaluations were not sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs. The district needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of the suspected disability and determine the students' eligibility and educational needs.

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:04.5 Evaluation procedures**

The district is required to ensure at a minimum that evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by parents, that may assist in determining: whether the is a child with a disability and the content of the IEP.

Through an interview and file reviews, the review team concluded, at the middle school and high school level, functional assessment is not being completed. In the lower grades, file reviews and interviews with staff indicated functional assessments are being completed since the start of the 2004-05 school year; however, file reviews indicated a limited amount of data that provides relevant information that directly assists persons in determining the educational needs of the student. Once the information is gathered, the district needs to analyze the information to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in specific skill areas, which can then be used, if appropriate, in a student's present level of performance on the IEP.

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:04.1 Evaluation procedures**

The district is required to ensure at a minimum that any standardized tests given to the child have been validated for the purpose for which they are used. Based on file reviews and an interview with the school psychologist, the district has not started using the updated version of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), which is the fourth edition.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult

student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Parent rights
- Prior notice/consent form

### **Promising practice**

The district keeps records at least five years after the student is dismissed from special education.

### **Meets requirements**

The district ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under Individuals with Disabilities Act. The district ensures the parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. The Parent Rights document includes information about surrogate parents.

The district provide the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education

The district's comprehensive plan has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions and requests for due process that ensure compliance.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The review team was not able to validate the districts decision to keep record for five years as a promising practice. Although the district is keeping records for beyond the required timeline, there is no specific benefit(s) to students or the district for keeping the records.

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards, meets requirements.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Student surveys
- Student files reviewed

**Promising practice**

The Rural Job Shadowing Program provides a "shadow" job experience for juniors or seniors in the Irene School District. The students complete a career program in the high school, research and choose a career, write resumes, cover letters, and thank you notes. Student choices are matched with business partner locations, primarily in the Sioux Falls area. Students are transported by bus to the business partner locations for the major portion of a normal workday. The Shadow counselors monitor the work required before shadowing, and also the follow-up after the experience. Although the program is not a requirement, all students are encouraged to attend. The participation has most often been 100% in the district. Although a fee is charged for the program, no student has ever been denied due to lack of funding. The district includes the shadow experience in students' individual education programs when appropriate. On occasion, the shadow program coordinator, Ranah Sample, works with the special educators to provide additional shadow experiences to some students as a transition activity. Several very positive experiences have been shared by many of the district's students on IEPs. In some cases, a job opportunity has come out of the shadow experience.

**Meets requirements**

The district ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. In files reviewed by the district, the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities, and that the IEP contains all required content. The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student

In addition, file reviews completed by the district support transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities.

**Validation Results****Promising practice**

The review team validated the Rural Job Shadowing Program as a promising practice.

**Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program meets requirements, except in the areas of present level of performance and graduation. See information under: Out of Compliance

**Out of compliance****ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)****Present level of performance**

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In six of six files reviewed, present levels of performance did not consistently contain the required content (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs, along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum). Parental input was consistently documented in the present level of performances. File reviews and interviews with staff indicated a need to improve functional assessments to acquire the needed information to develop present levels of performances for students eligible for special education services.

**Issues requiring immediate attention****ARSD 24:05:27:12 Graduation requirements**

Completion of an approved secondary special education program with a regular school diploma signifies that the student no longer requires special education services. The instructional program shall be specified on the IEP. The IEP shall state specifically how the student in need of special education or special education and related services will satisfy the district's graduation requirements. Parents must be

informed through the IEP process at least one year in advance of the intent to graduate their child upon completion of the IEP and to terminate services by graduation.

Through staff interviews and file documentation, the review team noted two students on IEPs who are scheduled to graduate in May 2005. The students' IEPs do not state specifically how the students will satisfy the district's graduation requirements. The district needs to conduct IEP meetings for each student as soon as possible to address specifically how the student in need of special education or special education and related services will satisfy the district's graduation requirements.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Student surveys
- Parent surveys
- Teacher surveys

### **Meets requirements**

File reviews and the district comprehensive plan ensure all children receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports needed for their successful participation.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.